



Home	Bill Information	California Law	Publications	Other Resources	My Subscriptions	My Favorites
------	------------------	----------------	--------------	-----------------	------------------	--------------

AB-376 Veterans benefits: veteran farmers or ranchers. (2017-2018)

SHARE THIS:  

Date Published: 09/02/2017 04:00 AM

Assembly Bill No. 376

CHAPTER 188

An act to add Chapter 8 (commencing with Section 1008) to Division 4 of the Military and Veterans Code, relating to veterans benefits.

[Approved by Governor September 01, 2017. Filed with Secretary of State September 01, 2017.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 376, Chávez. Veterans benefits: veteran farmers or ranchers.

Existing law establishes the Labor and Workforce Development Agency and provides that the agency consists of, among other entities, the California Workforce Development Board, the Employment Development Department, and the Employment Training Panel. Existing law establishes within state government a Department of Veterans Affairs and a Department of Food and Agriculture. Existing law provides for a variety of state benefits to veterans, including those relating to educational assistance and farm and home purchases, as specified.

This bill would, by July 1, 2018, require the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency, the California Department of Veterans Affairs, and the California Department of Food and Agriculture, in consultation with the United States Department of Agriculture and the United States Farm Service Agency, and other federal agencies as needed, to identify and post specified information to assist veterans in entering farming or ranching careers.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 8 (commencing with Section 1008) is added to Division 4 of the Military and Veterans Code, to read:

CHAPTER 8. Veteran Farmers or Ranchers

1008. The Legislature finds and declares the following:

(a) Agriculture is a major industry in California, with 81,700 farms and ranches. California agriculture is nearly a thirty-seven-billion-five-hundred-million-dollar (\$37,500,000,000) industry that generates one hundred billion dollars (\$100,000,000,000) in related economic activity.

(b) In 2010, the United States Department of Agriculture Secretary cited that the aging of principal farm operators across the nation is rising. The USDA Census of Agriculture, 2012 Census Highlights, finds that the average age of America's principal farm operators is 58.3 years of age and one-third are 65 years or older.

(c) An 8-percent national decrease in the number of farmers and ranchers is expected to occur between the years 2008 and 2018.

(d) Recognizing the growth of America's food production needs, and low proportions of beginning farmers and ranchers nationwide, the USDA Secretary identified America's returning military veterans as a promising population to enter careers as farmers and ranchers. The 2014 United States Farm Bill contains various landmark incentives to assist military veterans and disadvantaged populations to become farmers and ranchers.

(e) In November 2014, the USDA announced the designation of the nation's first USDA Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison to coordinate information, resources, and support for active duty military and veterans interested in entering careers as farmers and ranchers.

(f) The 2014 United States Farm Bill, also known as the Agricultural Act of 2014, contained various incentives designed to assist the nation's returning military veterans to acquire skills needed to start and manage a farm. Incentives include, but are not limited to, farm loans and microloans, education and training and technical assistance, including training in natural resource conservation techniques and practices.

(g) Eight percent of the nation's homeless population are military veterans and 45 percent of homeless veterans are African American or Latino, while less than 10 percent are women.

(h) More than six million veterans reside in rural America and approximately two million veterans are residents of California.

(i) California veterans use fewer benefits than their peers at the national level. While all veterans report only partial awareness of benefits for which they are eligible, some states have more advanced outreach programs to connect veterans to these available resources.

(j) The Legislature recognizes the opportunities to the state through landmark funding contained in the 2014 United States Farm Bill and subsequent United States Farm bills to assist military veterans in entering careers as farmers and ranchers.

(k) The Legislature acknowledges opportunities offered through a state and federal partnership to strengthen and enhance these resources to benefit California's veterans and historically underserved populations.

1008.5. (a) By July 1, 2018, the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency, the California Department of Veterans Affairs, and the California Department of Food and Agriculture, in consultation with the United States Department of Agriculture and the United States Farm Service Agency, and other federal agencies as needed, shall identify and post information pursuant to this section on their individual Internet Web sites as appropriate to assist, educate, train, and otherwise support California's transitioning service members and returning military veterans to enter into farming or ranching careers in California.

(b) Information posted by the Department of Food and Agriculture pursuant to subdivision (a) shall include, but is not limited to, information on all of the following:

- (1) The California Department of Food and Agriculture's Healthy Soils Initiative.
- (2) The 2014 United States Agricultural Act and subsequent agricultural acts.
- (3) Farm loans offered through the United States Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency.
- (4) The United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- (5) The federal Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program.

(c) Information posted by the Department of Veterans Affairs pursuant to subdivision (a) shall include, but is not limited to, information on the California Department of Veterans Affairs' Farm and Home Loan Program and federal farm and home loan programs, as appropriate.

(d) Information posted by the Labor and Workforce Development Agency pursuant to subdivision (a) shall include, but is not limited to, information on training and employment services offered through the America's Job Center of California, operating under the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency. It is the intent of the Legislature that the employment and training assistance provided through the America's Job Center of California to military veterans seeking careers as farm operators and ranchers shall be in the same manner as the assistance provided to other career seekers.